Organisation, the number of persons living below the poverty line in the country is 2603 lakhs.

(b) 766.46 lakh Ration Cards have been issued by the State Governments/UTs to the BPL families (including Antyodaya families).

(c) Government of India has fixed a uniform scale of 35 kg.-of foodgrains per family per month.

Sale of food grains at higher prices

†2611. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the matter of taking more money from consumers due to non-availability of stock of foodgrains in shops has been revealed during raids on two dozen ration shops in Delhi;

(b) if so, the action taken against these shopkeepers and whether any stern action is proposed to be taken regarding cancellation of these shopkeepers' licences; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (c) Inspection and checking of Fair Price Shops (FPS) is a continuous process and whenever serious violations of the terms of authorization/licences are noticed, stern action is taken. In the recent past, authorization of 10 FPS dealers have been suspended, and four licenses have been cancelled on grounds of overcharging.

Study of issues concerning consumer protection

2612. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have mooted a proposal to set up six working groups to study various issues related to consumer protection and suggest measures for dealing with them effectively;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether the consumer clubs would be set up in schools to create awareness about consumer rights; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) In the 23rd meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council held on 16th July, 2003 at New Delhi, it has been decided to set up the following six working groups to study the consumer related issues in details and to make suggestions/ recommendations to better protect the interest of consumers:—

(i) Working Group on Food Safety.

(ii) Working Group on Drugs, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices/ Equipments.

(iii) Working Group on Counterfeit, Fake, Spurious, Contraband products.

(iv) Working Group on Consumer Health & Safety concerning Tobacco & Tobacco Products.

(v) Working Group on Misleading Advertisements.

(vi) Working Group to suggest formulation of new legislations and to suggest proposals to amend the existing legislations relating to consumer protection.

(c) and (d) The Government has recently introduced a scheme on consumer clubs to involve students to boost the consumer awareness campaign in the country. The objectives of the Scheme are to educate children about the rights of the consumers as provided in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, to mobilize youngsters by instilling in them the spirit of protection of Consumer rights; to impart knowledge about the role of the consumers in protection of their rights and to strengthen the consumer movement in the country. According to the Scheme, a Consumer Club shall be set up in a middle/high/higher secondary school which is affiliated to a Government recognized Board and shall consist of a minimum 50 members. Each Consumer Club shall be in the charge of an active teacher in the concerned school. A group of not less than

20 and not more than 50 consumer clubs in one or more geographically contiguous districts will be serviced by a coordinating agency. A well established educational institution, a non-governmental voluntary organization or a professional body shall be designated as the coordinating agency.

The Department of Consumer Affairs shall provide financial support @ Rs. 10,000/- per annum per consumer club to the coordinating agency from the Consumer Welfare Fund. The coordinating agency will assist and monitor the functioning of each club.

Outstanding amount off sugarcane growers

† 2613. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether outstanding amount of sugarcane growers has been assessed by Government;

(b) if so, the total outstanding amount during June, 2003;

(c) whether Government have decided to allocate Rs. 600 crores for paying the outstanding amount; and

(d) if so, allocation made to the farmers out of the above amount, State-wise and amount-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) and (b) As on 30.6.2003, the outstanding amount of sugarcane dues to the sugarcane growers for the season 2002-2003, was about Rs. 3181.75 crores.

(c) and (d) In order to liquidate the sugarcane price dues of the farmers, the Government has taken the following measures:-

(i) A buffer stock of 20 lakh tonnes of sugar has been created for a period of one year. This will enable the sugar mills to get a subsidy amount of Rs. 412 crore from the Sugar Development Fund. In addition, an amount of Rs. 374 crores would be available from the banks to the mills on account of buffer stock. Thus, a

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.